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ABSTRACT

Recent expansion of media coverage of early childhood issues and increased funding for early childhood programs are due in part to deliberate efforts to increase public engagement in efforts to improve the lives of young children and their families. This brief describes recent early childhood public engagement efforts and outlines lessons for public engagement leaders. The report is presented in three parts. Part 1 of the report defines public engagement and describes how national, state, and local leaders have engaged the public in early childhood issues. Part 2 outlines seven key lessons that informed these efforts. These lessons are: (1) see a campaign in stages; (2) know how people see the issue before beginning; (3) target people who have the power to elicit change; (4) delineate costs of not taking action as well as the benefits of change; (5) create different messages for different groups; (6) timing is crucial; and (7) unexpected messengers make a difference. Part 3 offers concrete tips for how a wide variety of community entities can take action to promote the healthy development of the nation's youngest children. Two appendices contain Starting Points Projects contact information and a media resource list. (Contains 16 references.) (KB)

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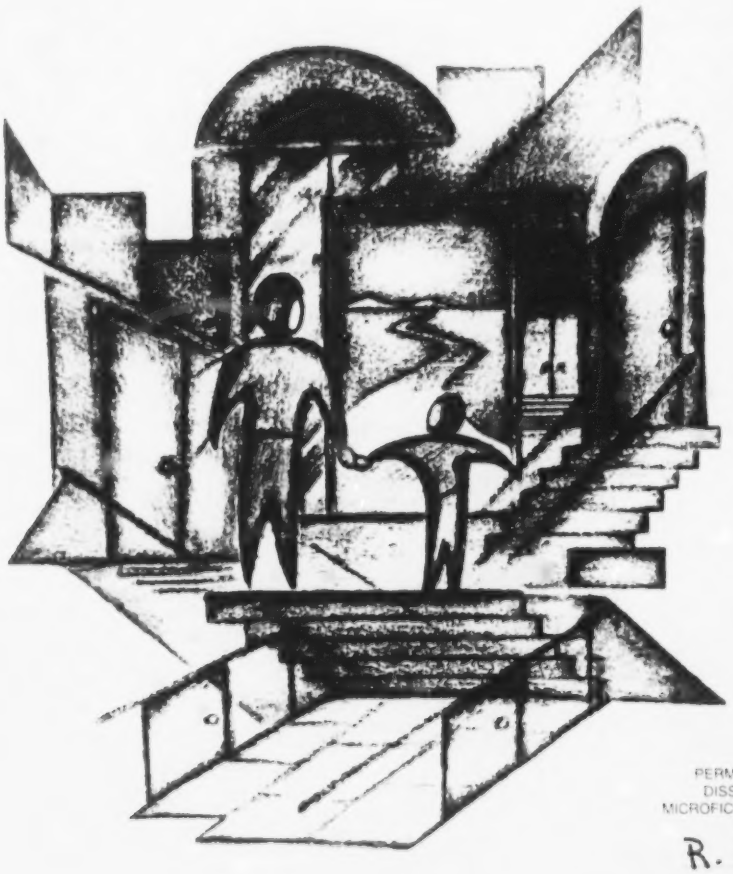
# The Seven Lessons of Early Childhood Public Engagement



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Starting Points 2B

Meeting the Needs of Our Youngest Children

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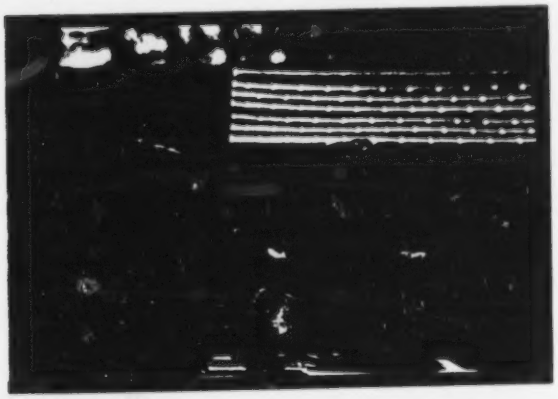
# The Seven Lessons of Early Childhood Public Engagement

BY NINA SAZER O'DONNELL AND ELLEN GALINSKY, FAMILIES AND WORK INSTITUTE

**IN 1994, THE PUBLICATION OF *STARTING POINTS*** by the Carnegie Corporation of New York heralded a "quiet crisis" for our nation's youngest children. The report documented the nation's lack of community-based supports for families with young children, accessible pre-natal and well-baby care and quality child care, and "an epidemic of inadvertent neglect." These findings were juxtaposed with research that underscores the importance of positive early childhood development for later school and life success.



Today, the "crisis" is no longer so quiet. The media have significantly expanded their coverage of early childhood issues. More individuals and organizations have gotten involved. More elected officials and community leaders have taken a stand on the importance of the early years. New funding has been directed to early childhood, and new programs are emerging across the nation.

Why is this happening? Why now? The answers rest in part on deliberate efforts at the national, state and local levels to increase *public engagement* in efforts to improve the lives of young children and their families.

This brief describes recent early childhood public engagement efforts and outlines lessons for public engagement leaders. Part 1 defines public engagement and describes how national, state and local leaders have engaged the public in early childhood issues. Part 2 outlines seven key lessons that informed these efforts. Part 3 offers concrete tips for how a wide variety of community members—from architects to youth—can take action to promote the healthy development of our nation's youngest children.

## 1. Introduction

### WHAT IS PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT?

**Public:** relating to or concerning all the people of a country or community; a group of people with a common interest; of, concerning, or affecting the community or the people: *the public good*.

**Engagement:** something that serves to engage; the condition of being in gear.[1]

Public engagement is more than public awareness, although convincing people that there is a public problem is necessary for engagement. It is more than public education, although informing the public about how to solve the problem is equally necessary. Public engagement entails taking action, addressing problems, and creating solutions that lead to a public

good. Lori Dorfman, Ph.D., Director of the Berkeley Media Studies Group, defines public engagement as "salience," noting that "it is not only that people know about something, but that they care about it as well. If they are really engaged, they will take the next step and do something about it. The best campaigns help people understand what they should do and help them take that action."

Effective early childhood public engagement:

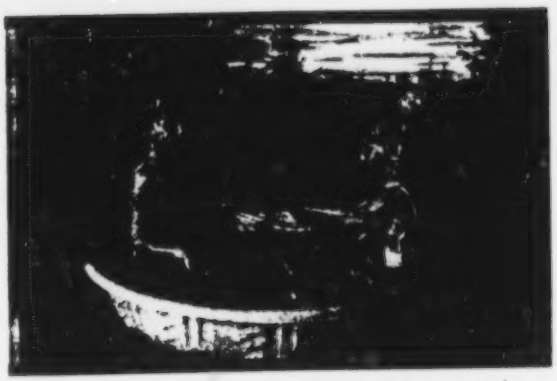
- increases public understanding of the importance of the early years of life;
- demonstrates why it is in the public interest to invest in the positive development of young children; and
- engages diverse stakeholders or *publics* in action that achieves results.

## WHAT ARE THE MOST EFFECTIVE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES?

This was the question confronting early childhood leaders who wanted to respond to the call-to-action issued by *Starting Points*, which documented the serious conditions affecting many very young children and proposed action.[2] But action cannot occur without a change in the public will. The public must understand how these problems affect the public good. The public must realize that solutions involve families, employers, states and communities. The public must also see that change is beneficial and possible.

All too often, early childhood leaders have said, "There have been shifts in the public will about smoking, about drugs, about the environment, about child abuse, and about seat belts. Why can't awareness of the importance of the early years of life change on the same scale?"

Based on the premise that leaders of other successful campaigns had knowledge and experience that might apply to the problems outlined by *Starting Points*, Families and Work Institute (FWI) and the Carnegie Corporation of New York convened a



national meeting in 1996. This meeting brought together leaders of successful public awareness and engagement efforts, such as child abuse prevention, environmental protection, smoking cessation, drug abuse prevention and other health and public education campaigns with leading communications, media and research experts to provide advice and share lessons learned. These lessons provided a framework for successful national, state and local early childhood public engagement efforts under the banner of the *I Am Your Child* Campaign.

## THE NATIONAL *I AM YOUR CHILD* CAMPAIGN

In 1997, FWI collaborated with the Reiner Foundation's *I Am Your Child* Campaign, chaired by producer, director and actor Rob Reiner. Representing a unique partnership among the media, funders and national organizations, the campaign created a national media presence, materials for the general public, parents and caregivers of young children, along with campaign tools and materials for state and local public engagement leaders.[3]

National media developed for the campaign captured public attention, bringing early childhood issues to the fore. This included: a prime time ABC television special, created by Rob Reiner; a *Newsweek Magazine* special edition; a week-long series on the *Today Show* and *Good Morning America*; a video for parents—*The First Years Last Forever*; a CD-ROM for parents and caregivers titled *I Am Your Child*; a

toll-free number; brochures and action tips for parents and community leaders; and a web site. These media and materials were widely distributed throughout the country and used to stimulate state and local public engagement efforts.

Campaign organizers developed a public policy agenda based on the recommendations of the Carnegie Corporation of New York's report, *Starting Points*. FWI created the *Early Childhood Public Engagement Network* (EC-PEN) to support the campaign's outreach efforts. This network links 250 national organization partners and more than 100 state and local coalitions representing families, child health, early learning, parenting support, faith communities, business, law enforcement, media and other stakeholders who share a determination to improve early childhood outcomes in this country. The EC-PEN continues to disseminate information to the media, families and policy leaders, resulting in significantly increased public awareness about the importance of the early years, and increased action to improve young children's positive development.[4]

As campaign partners, national organizations used their communications' vehicles—conferences, journals, newsletters and web sites—to share information about the importance of the early years. They also encouraged members to get involved locally. Some launched special projects, such as the American Academy of Pediatrics' efforts to promote early literacy, ZERO TO THREE's national parent survey, the Child Welfare League of America's *Prudential Positive Parenting Program* and the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences' middle and high school curricula that teach child development and neuroscience information.

In addition, FWI published four books for public engagement leaders: *Rethinking the Brain: New Insights into Early Development; Community Mobilization: Strategies to Support Young Children and Their Families; Early Childhood Action Tips;* and *Measuring Progress and Results in Early Childhood System Development*.

## STATE AND LOCAL CAMPAIGNS

The *I Am Your Child* Campaign was designed to engage the public at the national, state and local levels, for maximum effect. Existing organizations and new coalitions adapted *I Am Your Child* campaign media and materials for their own states and communities. States and communities also created their own media, materials and public engagement strategies. Throughout the country, state and local coalitions shared information, called parents, employers and policy makers to action, mobilized the media and created public-private partnerships to address early childhood challenges.

Leading the way were the Starting Points Projects. Funded initially in 1996 by Carnegie Corporation of New York, these projects created state and community initiatives to put the *Starting Points* recommenda-

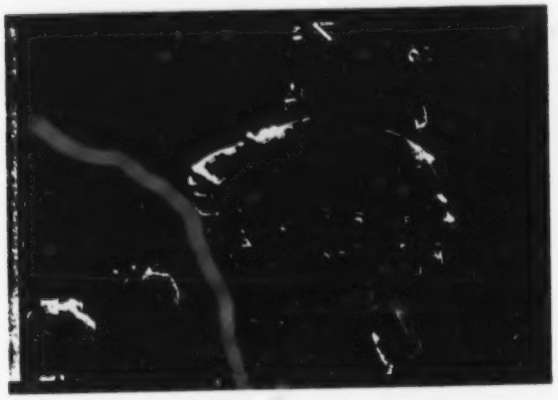
tions into action. Public engagement campaigns and strategies were an integral part of larger early childhood system improvement and expansion efforts for many of these projects. (See Appendix A: Starting Points Projects Contact Information.)

Examples from these projects illustrate the seven lessons that continue to guide successful national, state and local early childhood public engagement campaigns.

## 2. Seven Lessons of Public Engagement

### LESSON 1: SEE A CAMPAIGN IN STAGES—FROM CHANGING PUBLIC AWARENESS TO CHANGING BEHAVIOR, TO ENGAGING THE PUBLIC IN ACTION

Social change takes time and requires multiple opportunities to learn new information and change behavior. Repetition is essential for learning and each stage of a campaign—from changing awareness to stimulating action—requires targeting effective messages to key audiences over time. Understanding that successful campaigns progress from public awareness to increased knowledge and to private and public action makes it easier to develop the right strategies for each stage. "Be prepared to spend seven to ten years on your effort," advised the group of public engagement experts convened at Carnegie in 1996.



### Staging Campaigns

Pittsburgh Starting Points created a multi-year, multi-stage campaign to promote early literacy. It began with a public opinion poll to get baseline information about parent knowledge and behavior and to identify the most effective messages. This led to a media and action campaign that encouraged ten minutes a day of reading to all children by saying, "reading is fun for you and your child and it stimulates your child's intellectual development." The campaign used TV, radio, and billboard ads to raise public awareness. It also sponsored neighborhood and community-wide events, such as reading rallies with public celebrities reading stories and distributing books and reading lists to 13,000 first-through-third graders. The campaign mobilized community-wide interest in early literacy.

As the campaign progressed, 18 school districts and 18 pediatric practices partnered to establish 87 places where, during well-baby visits, doctors give parents information, books and help on how to read with their children. Then *Pittsburgh Magazine* joined in. They published a special supplement, *Twenty Everyday Ways to Advance the Reading Skills of Very Young Children*, prominently featuring Pittsburgh Starting Points, along with its funders and sponsors.

The campaign then moved to a stage in which key players created partnerships and structures to sustain early literacy activities over time, such as a citywide literacy task force, higher education involvement and efforts to engage practitioners. Pittsburgh Starting Points is also: working to include early literacy knowledge in pre-service and ongoing teacher training; recruiting and training parent champions to advocate

*Continued on page 6*

*Staging Campaigns, continued from page 5*
for more early literacy resources; encouraging school districts to create early literacy programs; and expanding early literacy activities in the city's twenty-seven family support centers.

**Rhode Island Starting Points** partnered with Rhode Island Kids Count (RI Kids Count), weaving together an effort to engage key stakeholders with a media campaign letting the public know about the status of children and what can be done to improve early childhood outcomes.

Every year, RI Kids Count invites 300 of the state's most important leaders, including the Governor, the U.S. Senators, other elected officials, doctors, ministers, elected officials, business leaders, families, policymakers and others to a high profile event to release its annual Factbook on the status of children. Over time, invitations to this event have become coveted. The occasion is now known as the time and place where state leaders assess where they've been and commit to solutions in a very public way. In addition, RI Kids Count leaders personally deliver the book to the state's key policy leaders, from the legislators to city and town council chairs. RI Starting Points and RI Kids Count have learned that stakeholders pay more attention when the media consistently covers early childhood issues. Therefore, RI Kids Count used the same strategy of hosting a high-profile event when it released its first Special Report, *Building an Early Care and Education System in Rhode Island*. This event led to extensive coverage by print and broadcast media.

**Florida Starting Points** took another approach to developing a staged campaign. This initiative began by designing a "train the trainer" model that taught 3,000 volunteers from all walks of life to present information on early brain development to policymakers and elected officials.

Using these presentations to mobilize community members, the volunteers reached more than 58,000 Floridians, from the Governor to legislators and senior citizen voters. This grass-roots effort led to school readiness legislation which now funds diverse community-based efforts to assess local early learning needs and create effective school readiness programs throughout the state. This strategy also led to funding for Healthy Families Florida, a primary child abuse prevention program.

**Boston Starting Points** Connecting the Dots for Tots Project (Dots) created a staged campaign with the Boston Mayor's Office and other community partners. In 1997, Mayor Menino created a municipal Office for Children and Families. This office invited Dots and it's many partners to help organize Boston's first *Children's Week*. *Children's Week* was a way to focus community attention on the needs of young children and their families and to educate, engage and motivate parents. The effort began with a high profile dinner that featured the national *I Am Your Child* television special produced by Rob Reiner. The following year, *Children's Week* expanded its focus and activities to a month-long *Focus on Children and Youth*. This larger effort aimed to: spotlight existing programs and resources; provide families and other stakeholders with tools that helped them to advocate for needed changes; and celebrate and honor volunteers and professionals who work for and with young people. In 1999, *Children's Week* partners created the *Boston Family Guide: Resources for Raising Our Children*, a 32-page resource book for families. Dots sees these efforts to engage families and the public as key to improving family access to services, increasing broad stakeholder support for early childhood resources and creating a culture that values the work of families and early childhood professionals and volunteers.

## LESSON 2: KNOW HOW PEOPLE SEE YOUR ISSUE BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Before attempting to affect public awareness, knowledge and action, it is essential to know how the public sees your issues. Many national organizations, such as ZERO TO THREE, the Ad Council, Child Care Action Campaign, Child Trends, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, the National Center for Children in Poverty, Public Agenda and others, conduct and publish research on how various publics see various early childhood issues. Many of these organizations also maintain web sites that make this and other research available electronically.

While these national data are invaluable, it is also essential to explore public opinion closer to home. Ideally this process should use a combination of existing state and local data sources, such as census, Kids Count or United Way data, as well as more specific data from focus groups, public forums, interviews and other conversations with the publics you hope to engage.

Sometimes this kind of research leads to surprises. For example, early childhood leaders in Vermont decided to hold focus groups with employers before creating the now thriving Child Care Fund of Vermont (CCFF) and a campaign to get employers to contribute.[5] Before the focus groups, early childhood leaders thought that employers would contribute to a statewide fund to address their employee child care needs. The focus groups revealed that employers weren't enthusiastic about contributing to a statewide fund but *would* contribute to benefit their own region or community. They also learned that most Vermont employers did not know how child care affects their bottom line, and fewer knew what to do about it. This knowledge led leaders to structure the Fund to include regional business consortia that allow employers to help increase and improve child care in their own communities. The focus group results also led CCFF leaders to create the *Child Care Counts Honor Roll* for Vermont employers, an annual listing

in *Vermont Business Magazine* of family-friendly businesses in Vermont with descriptions of their practices, to suggest ways that other employers could address child care and to raise awareness about the business impact of child care.

Research has also provided surprises at the national level. Reflecting a long-term commitment to children's issues, **The Advertising (Ad) Council** worked with **The Public Agenda Foundation** to investigate how the public feels about children. Guided by the feedback obtained from a series of focus group interviews, The Ad Council concluded that the traditional approach used by most children's advocates to encourage public action was backfiring. Depicting the plight of young children as a series of crises—children born into poverty or exposed to violence, infants born prematurely or to mothers who are substance abusers, and so forth—produced feelings of hopelessness and apathy. Participants tended to distance themselves from the situation, often ultimately blaming, even demonizing those "bad" parents who would permit such terrible things to happen to their children. The Ad Council learned that the public reacts differently when parents are included in the message and depicted as trying hard. It also learned that positive, "here's how to make things better" messages are more effective at engaging various publics in community problem-solving and at generating public support for problem-solving programs.

## Finding Out What People Think

Baltimore Starting Points partnered with the citywide *Safe and Sound Campaign*, which promotes support for families with young children, in a broad, participatory effort to learn what citizens thought the campaign focus should be. Selected as one of eight cities to participate in a two-year Robert Wood Johnson (RWJ) Foundation Urban Health Initiative, Baltimore's campaign spent two years soliciting community input, through neighborhood speak-outs, meetings with parents, youth and other stakeholders and an annual summit/family picnic. Co-sponsored by the *Safe and Sound Campaign* and Baltimore Healthy Start/Starting Points, more than 7,000 families-mothers, fathers and children-attended. In order to reach the picnic area, participants had to vote on the campaign's top five goals. Based on this extensive community research and engagement strategy, Baltimore was one of the five cities chosen by RWJ for support to implement the Urban Health Initiative, which improves child health and safety by bringing together youth, parents and other leaders in distressed urban communities.

San Francisco Starting Points is working in partnership with San Francisco's Children and Families First Commission to obtain the broadest possible public input in the creation of the county's plan for services for children from birth to five. San Francisco is one of eight counties participating in this foundation-funded project. The process aims to stimulate public awareness and solicit broad public input on how best to allocate funds made available to counties for early childhood programs and services through Proposition 10.[3]

The first stage of the project included focus groups in multiple languages with parents who are often left out of formal public hearings or meetings. A parent survey in English, Spanish and Cantonese was widely distributed through child care programs, family resource centers, and other settings where parents gather. An eight-county telephone survey established baseline of information on the views of county residents about early childhood issues, knowledge of early childhood brain development and Proposition 10. An active Civic Engagement Advisory Committee, representing organizations working directly with parents, has been key to getting this project off the ground.

A series of community conversations about the Commission's proposed strategic plan are the next steps. Parents, service providers, and interested members of the public will be invited to create a shared perspective on priorities for young children and their families. Input from these community dialogues will help shape the Commission's strategic plan. Once that plan is adopted, a new round of community conversations will lead to the strategies to be supported with Proposition 10 funding.

The project will continue to use public forums, neighborhood discussions, workshops, training and other strategies to engage citizens and seek common ground for early childhood development plans and priorities. The goal of the project is to establish broad civic engagement as early childhood programs and services are implemented and evaluated over time.

## LESSON 3: TARGET THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE THE POWER TO BRING ABOUT CHANGE

It is important to organize a campaign on multiple levels, mobilizing effective change agents at each level. It is essential to define and target both the decision-makers who can make change happen and those who influence them. Campaigns must also answer the question, "What do you want me to do?" for each of these groups (see Section 3, Early Childhood Action Tips). Effective campaigns typically target at least three groups that have the greatest potential for creating change:

- media;
- key stakeholders, including employers, health, faith communities, youth, grandparents, law enforcement, civic groups and others; and
- families.

**The media** play a powerful role in focusing public attention on issues. Successful public engagement requires effective media strategies and alliances. Because the media also influence decision-making in both our public and private lives, it is important to work with all media—radio, television, newspapers, magazines, newsletters, journals and the Internet—to raise public awareness, educate the public and encourage positive action. Many media producers are anxious to cover issues with broad audience appeal and some journalists are also interested in doing a better job of covering early childhood and other children's issues (see page 12: Engaging Media).

Some groups, such as the Boston *I Am Your Child* Coalition, work effectively with media by establishing media task forces to advise them. Several local, state and national organizations offer training on how to work with media, such as the Benton Foundation *Connect for Kids* campaign, the Communications Consortium Media Center, United Ways and other groups (see Appendix B: Media Resource List).

**Key stakeholders** are also essential for effective public engagement campaigns. **Business leaders** are often effective influencers of elected officials and are increasingly influence early childhood policy (see page 11: Engaging Business).

Early childhood initiatives are also engaging **health champions, educators, elected officials, librarians, government, faith communities, law enforcement, early childhood service providers, unions, youth, elders, architects, universities, researchers, funders** and others as effective influencers of elected officials at both the state and local levels. Each of these groups bring new resources to the table and influence decision-making in our personal and public lives. For example, health leaders are improving services and promoting health access for all children, law enforcement leaders are advocating for expanding and improving early childhood programs and libraries are promoting early literacy.

It is important to find the right "win-win" for involving these diverse groups. That is, people must understand why it is in their mutual interest to work together.

**Families**, including parents, grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles and others, are essential to effective early childhood public engagement campaigns. In some communities, campaigns are making special efforts to include both mothers and fathers, consciously bringing men to the parenting table, along with women. This strategy broadens opportunities for engaging parents, both within their families and in their professional and volunteer lives. Campaigns aimed at changing family behavior, such as parenting practices or child care choices, must consider who within families makes decisions and how best to influence them. This varies among different cultures and public engagement leaders must be both strategic and culturally appropriate when seeking to influence family decision-making and engagement.

At every level, the more strategic a campaign can be in terms of who is targeted and what they are asked to do, the greater the chances are that the campaign will succeed (see page 10: Engaging Families).

## Stakeholder Engagement Planning Matrix

Many states and communities have learned to carefully analyze who has a stake in improving and expanding early childhood systems, why each group of stakeholders needs to be involved and roles they can play in sophisticated and creative ways. Different publics require different communications and engagement strategies. Public engagement campaigns must therefore be multi-lingual, able to communicate with and engage diverse groups, from parents to policymakers. This sample matrix format can help groups consider who to involve, what their interest in the issue is, what they can bring to the table and how best to engage them:

| Individual or Organization Name | Why Would They Be Interested | Resources or Skills They Bring | How They Should Be Recruited | Orientation and Information Needs |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |
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## Engaging Families

Hawaii Starting Points, housed at the Hawaii Good Beginnings Alliance (GBA), engages families through Play and Learn Groups and a Parent/Community Leaders Program. This program invites children from birth to age five and their families to come to a weekly playgroup. Led by trained facilitators, many of whom are parents, these groups provide an environment where parents and caregivers learn through play about early childhood health and development. Playgroup staff also provide resource and referral information and practical ideas to use at home, as they model developmentally appropriate practices. Topics and content for the playgroups are determined by the parents.

Parents are also invited to help with group activities, including designing or participating in training that prepares them to lead other play groups and/or to become advocates for young children and their families at the local and state levels. As a result, families are not only improving their own parenting skills and knowledge, but are also emerging as a powerful new voice in the community for children.

West Virginia Starting Points created local Family Resource Networks (FRNs) to engage families in expanding and improving early childhood resources close to home. FRNs bring together all community stakeholders with an interest in services for children and families, including families. They serve as forums for all interested parties, assessing community needs, developing local action plans, and focusing on system change.

West Virginia Starting Points leaders created a collection of tools to help the FRNs, from newsletter articles and tips for families to strategies for encouraging family-friendly business practices. This catalogue of materials offers strategies to raise awareness, increase knowledge and inspire local West Virginians to action that promotes young children's positive development.[8]

## Engaging Business

Florida's *One Hour a Week for Kids* is an effort to bring together the elite of Florida's lobbying corps on behalf of children. Lobbyists work for companies involved in the Florida Child Care Executive Partnership, a coalition of business leaders who match state child care subsidies for qualifying employees, and others. Aware of the need to improve early childhood resources, the lobbyists decided to donate one hour each week of their time to advocate for child care and other legislation to improve Florida's education and economy. Currently, some of the capital's best business lobbyists give one hour a week to early childhood issues throughout legislative sessions. Each lobbyist works with three representatives and one senator. The lobbyists also contribute two hours per week for pre-session briefings on legislative and appropriations issues, about one hour per week of advocacy on issues, and time to report back to the statewide child advocacy forum.

Lobbyists involved in the effort in the 1999 legislative session included forty-four men and women from the:

- Asphalt Contractors Association
- Association of Counties
- Association of Realtors
- Chamber of Commerce
- Insurance Council
- Petroleum Council
- Retail Federation
- Transportation Builders Association
- United Business Association
- Federation of Independent Business
- NationsBank
- United Services Automobile Association

As a result of these efforts, the Florida Legislature increased child care subsidies by $37 million, including an allocation to pay the full market rate to providers who have achieved state-designated indicators of higher quality, such as more protective staff-child ratios and better trained and educated staff. This lobbying also led to a new requirement for a state credential for child care facility directors and an increase in training requirements for family child care providers and child care center personnel to thirty and forty clock hours per year, respectively.

Boston business leaders campaigned at the state legislature as part of the United Way's Success by Six Initiative. They succeeded in lobbying for legislation that established universal health coverage for young children, an increase in child care reimbursement rates and a commemorative license plate, with proceeds going to a child care quality improvement fund.

A Colorado bi-partisan Business Commission, convened by the Governor to determine how to better finance early childhood programs, successfully lobbied for state employer and family child care tax credits and a voluntary tax check off that allows taxpayers to contribute a portion of their state tax refund to a child care quality improvement fund. These business leaders went on to organize EDUCARE—a statewide early childhood system-building initiative.

## Engaging Media

In 1999, David Lawrence, Jr., former publisher of the *Miami Daily Herald*, spoke to newspaper publishers and editors in a special session at the annual meeting of the National Society of Newspaper Editors about the importance of early childhood and the need to cover this area better. Newspaper editors responded enthusiastically and requested training for their staffs. With Cathy Trost of the University of Maryland's Casey Journalism Center for Children and Families, Matthew Melmed of ZERO TO THREE and Ellen Galinsky of FWI, Lawrence presented a model newsroom training seminar in Dallas and New Orleans to encourage more consistent, balanced, comprehensive and ongoing reporting of early childhood issues.

In 1998, **Lifetime Television** joined with leading nonprofit organizations, parents, advocates and experts on a campaign to serve as a voice for millions of families who want to take action on child care, an issue important to many *Lifetime TV* viewers. This campaign uses a web site to enable working parents to: adopt a politician; sign online petitions; get involved in improving and expanding quality child care in their communities; find quality child care; and connect with others concerned about child care. The campaign has gathered thousands of e-mail messages from families around the country that detail their trials and triumphs in finding safe, affordable, high-quality child care. *Lifetime TV* is taking these stories to elected officials to demonstrate the need for action on this issue.[7]

In **North Carolina**, CBS affiliate owner, Jim Goodman, former chair of the North Carolina Partnership for Children, decided to donate airtime for all the state's gubernatorial candidates to make a statement on three key issues. One of those issues is the future of Smart Start. These statements are being aired regularly and posted as text and live video on the station's web site during the 2000 primary election season.

**RI Kids Count** attracts media attention to its annual fact book by giving an embargoed copy to state and local reporters a week in advance so they have time to develop state and local stories. Because reporters appreciate this professional "heads up" they tend to cover the issues well. RI Kids Count leaders have also generated media attention by using attractive and appealing backdrops for public and televised events, such as blown-up photos of young children.

## LESSON 4: SPELL OUT THE COSTS OF NOT TAKING ACTION AS WELL AS THE BENEFITS OF CHANGE

People do not change their opinions or act to bring about change unless it is clear that the benefits of change outweigh the costs of staying the same. Similarly, businesses, states and communities will not consider or undergo change unless there is a compelling reason to do so. Without such a *business case*, the costs of doing business as usual are seen as less then the costs of change. In recent years, many convincing arguments have been made to present both the costs of inaction and the benefits of improving early childhood outcomes.

### The Costs of Inaction

Many compelling cases document the costs of poor long- and short-term educational and economic outcomes. Americans in all sectors and all political parties want America's children to be well-educated in this time of global and technological expansion. In addition, employers, policy makers, states and communities are concerned about attracting and sustaining well-qualified current and future workforces. Lack of qualified workers not only affects the profitability of businesses, but can also reduce tax revenues that support public services, such as education.

A strong case can be made to many parents, policy makers and employers that the generally poor quality of child care in our country can have negative effects on the child development outcomes that are necessary for school and life success.[9] Many of these stakeholders also understand that it costs more to treat a problem later on than to prevent it in the first place. In some states and communities, researchers, kindergarten teachers, elementary school principals, superintendents and others are assessing youngsters' skills when they get to school to document the need for preschool programs.

### Articulating the Costs and Benefits of Change

Vermont Success By 6 leaders used public concern about health, prison and child abuse costs to gain support for more early childhood programs.

Rhode Island Starting Points focused public attention on the state's increasing income disparity, publicizing the fact that over 64 percent of the state's poorest kids have a parent who lacks a high school diploma. This case goes on to assert that lack of a high school diploma leads to poverty and because the state wants a better educated workforce and healthy future economy, early childhood spending is a wise investment.

Pittsburgh Starting Points leaders commissioned a 1996 study by Dr. Charles Bruner of the Iowa Child and Family Policy Center that compares community costs to repair the results of inadequate early childhood development to the cost savings of early childhood investments. This report estimated that failure is costing Pittsburgh $563,000,000 in 52 high-risk neighborhoods. Initiative leaders recommend:

- using business language (e.g. "cost-benefit") for such studies;
- communicating findings in simple, clear language and visuals;
- getting business leaders to sponsor and publicize such work; and
- designing cost-benefit studies so that they can be easily repeated over time.

## The Benefits of Quality Early Childhood Programs

There is more research available than ever before that documents the benefits of improving early childhood outcomes. Recent studies such as the **Abecedarian Project** and the **1998 RAND Report** confirm the efficacy of quality early childhood programs.[10]

There is also a growing body of research documenting the positive effects of supportive communities. For example, longitudinal research being conducted by Felton Earls and Maya Carlson of the Harvard University School of Public Health in several Chicago neighborhoods shows that when communities are involved with and supportive of their children, there are likely to be fewer violent crimes.[11] This kind of research helps make a case for why there is a public stake in supporting children, rather that viewing children and families as a purely private domain.

Sometimes it is necessary to expand who benefits to build support for change. Because most publicly funded early childhood services have only been available for low-income or otherwise at-risk children and families, many Americans balk at the notion of greater public support of these services. When the frame is changed, however, and an initiative or set of campaign goals clearly benefits everyone, public opinion can change (see this page: Changing the Frame).

A current strategic challenge facing public engagement strategists is that many "publics" don't really know what comprehensive early childhood programs, services and systems look like. Most Americans can clearly visualize what school looks like, based on their own experiences. Too few of us have equally vivid mental images of preschool programs and services. Effective campaigns use pictures, words, videos, web sites, site visits and other strategies to address this challenge.

Many states and communities find that emphasizing a continuum of care—from parents, to the families, friends and other caregivers—avoids placing parents and out-of-home caregivers in opposing roles. This strategy positions non-parental care as one of the many settings in which young children need care and nurturing. Including everyone who cares for young children in a wide range of settings can help prevent needless divisiveness and can stimulate broader public engagement.

Ultimately, an effective public engagement campaign must be able to articulate the rationale for each group it aims to involve. Although there is a growing literature that documents these cases,[12] the best way to identify the most compelling business case for each audience is to consult with the groups you hope to engage.

## Changing the Frame

**Significant, sustained public support for North Carolina's statewide Smart Start initiative has grown, in large part, because the initiative offers benefits to *all* families in *all* counties of the state—from parenting information and community play groups to child care, health and dental care and other services for young children. Because everyone benefits and because Smart Start has done a good job of communicating these broad benefits to a wide variety of publics, from families to employers, bi-partisan public support for Smart Start is strong. Not only has the state budget for the program grown each year since its inception, but some legislators have been voted out of office because of their lack of support for the program.**

## LESSON 5: CREATE DIFFERENT MESSAGES FOR DIFFERENT GROUPS

Because there are many audiences for every campaign, it is important to craft specific messages and materials for each group. Research is the best way to determine the right messages. Effective campaigns use consultation, focus groups and other strategies to know which messages and materials will work best with each group.

This research should address cultural, economic and other differences and concerns of diverse groups. For example, it isn't enough to know that there are many Latino families in your target group. To craft the right messages, you must also know whether they are first or tenth generation Americans, what countries they came from, what languages they speak, what their literacy levels are, who influences decision-making in their families, how they get information and which messengers they consider credible. The answers to these and other questions may lead you to develop multiple messages and materials for diverse groups of Latino families.

Messages must be repeated and extended over time for maximum impact and must be delivered in different ways to reach different audiences. For example, many non-English speaking families listen to radio stations that broadcast programs in their native tongues. Some public engagement leaders have used this opportunity to produce and air foreign language radio PSAs and child development programming.

It is equally important to take literacy levels and communication styles of target audiences into account. Many campaigns have designed materials with no words for low-literacy families, prepared issue briefs or brochures for business or policy leaders and produced short videos for community groups.

### Targeting Messages

**Baltimore Starting Points** wanted to reach youth—future parents—with compelling information about healthy early development and knew that the arts could be a powerful communications tool. Project leaders decided to create a play to deliver information about early brain development to teens in a way that grabs and keeps their attention. The project hired a script writer who wrote a play called *Connections* that teaches youth about early brain development through the voices of three unborn babies talking to their pregnant mothers. The play starts with unlit lamps of all shapes and sizes spread over a dark stage. Three pregnant moms sit on stools in the center. As the play progresses and information about how the brain develops and how parents can facilitate optimal development is revealed, the lamps turn on, one by one (connections are made). By the end of the play, all the lamps are lit and the stage is bright. Baltimore Starting Points is now working with a professional theatre company and plans to share the script with schools, youth groups and other theatre associations.

**Colorado Starting Points**, housed at Colorado Bright Beginnings (CBB), is developing several new initiatives to match messages and messengers with specific audiences. In order to reach the general public—from youth to seniors—with information that encourages early language development, CBB will work with Colorado museums to train docents on how to talk with young children. The tour guides will model appropriate language stimulation for families and actively engage children who visit the museums. The goal is to help families interact with their infants in public spaces.

*Continued on page 16*

*Targeting Messages, continued from page 15*

CBB is also developing a new volunteer "Play Partner" program that recruits parents and grandparents to model language-rich "learning games" at public events with their babies. This initiative is part of CBB's campaign to promote talking to babies in all settings as the community norm.

CBB is targeting four-to-twelve weeks of life as a crucial time to introduce language development concepts and infant games to parents and is inviting new parents to become members of a three-year language development initiative with their own babies. CBB is also partnering with the American Academy of Pediatrics, Colorado Chapter and Healthy Child Care Colorado to supplement language development activities in child care settings. This entire language development initiative is promoted statewide through televised, cause-related marketing ads that urge families to "talk with and encourage" their babies.

## LESSON 6: TIMING IS CRUCIAL

Public engagement leaders must always look for ways to capture and sustain public attention, to provide new information, and to continually make connections between early childhood and other public concerns, such as education, crime prevention or economic development.

Some public engagement leaders have linked crime prevention with early childhood in response to incidents of school and community violence.[15] They understood that when the public is concerned about violence it is also more open to hearing about solutions, such as preventive quality early childhood programs. Others include the voices of youth on timely topics as a way of providing new information and gaining public attention. Recent public interest in early literacy is one of the newest opportunities to frame a compelling and timely case for early childhood programs and services.

To take advantage of both planned and unplanned opportunities to build upon and extend public interest and engagement in early childhood issues, it is helpful to create and sustain effective relationships with the media at all levels, from major newspapers to foreign language radio to neighborhood newsletters.

### Good Timing

San Francisco Starting Points used the welfare reform process as an opportunity to increase high quality child care for low income children. When Welfare Reform was enacted, Mayor Brown turned to the Early Childhood Interagency Council (ECIC)—an interdisciplinary collaborative of early childhood stakeholders created by Starting Points—to serve as the Child Care Subcommittee of his Welfare Reform Task Force. Starting Points staff conducted extensive research about the funding for and availability of subsidized child care, and worked with the Subcommittee to develop recommendations for local implementation of federal welfare reform legislation. The Board of Supervisors relied on these recommendations and information prepared for the Welfare Reform Child Care Task Force for budget decisions. As a result, the Board allocated an additional $2 million in City funds for child care subsidies and child care facilities development. Since that time, Starting Points staff has provided child care expertise to internal welfare reform planning at the city's Department of Human Services, resulting in an additional $2 million for quality enhancements, such as mental health consultation, to local child care programs.

*Continued on page 17*

*Good Timing, continued from page 16*

**Rhode Island** leaders took advantage of federal Welfare Reform legislation and the confluence of the key champions in state government, the legislature and the private sector in 1996 to create the nation's first initiative to provide state health benefits to licensed family child care providers and their minor children, along with an entitlement to child care for low-income families. In 1998, coverage was expanded to include center-based providers under *Starting Right*, a comprehensive early care and education law that aims to ensure the availability of high quality child care. This significant advance was possible in large part because of public and private sector champions and leaders who were able to see Welfare Reform as an opportunity to improve state policies and programs; a strong state economy; and an advocacy community that make a strong case for equity in child care pay and benefits at a time when state leaders were able to respond.

**Hawaii's Starting Points**, as part of the Hawaii Good Beginnings Alliance (GBA), was able to take advantage of an opportunity to create the collaborative *Boost 4 Kids* early childhood nutrition initiative by realizing that the timing was right for many of the initiative's partners. The National Partnership for Reinventing Government announced *Boost 4 Kids* just as GBA was working to encourage collaboration among state agencies (health education and human services), business, foundations and early childhood family support, health, education and child care leaders. All of these partners asked GBA to apply for the program on behalf of the state. The application was successful and GBA and its partners are now increasing the number of young children in the state who start each day with a nutritious breakfast. Efforts are also underway to encourage markets and other retailers to participate by offering breakfast items on sale to help families who serve breakfast at home. American Savings Bank, the major corporate sponsor of the breakfast program, is assisting with a statewide marketing campaign to promote the importance of a nutritious breakfast for children and is recruiting other corporate sponsors. *Boost 4 Kids* is helping more children get good breakfasts, and the success of the effort has encouraged partners to increase their collaborative efforts to help young children and their families. New *Boost 4 Kids* partnerships are now emerging to focus on child health access and school readiness.

## LESSON 7: UNEXPECTED MESSENGERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Hearing messages from expected messengers, such as teachers talking about the importance of education, is predictable and easy to dismiss as self-interest. Hearing messages from unexpected messengers creates increased interest and excitement. Unexpected messengers have stopping power—they cause us to take in information we might have missed precisely because they are unexpected-and therefore get our attention.

Many new early childhood messengers are stepping up to the plate, from health, business, media and family champions to faith leaders, sports figures, entertainment celebrities, police and attorneys general and leaders with diverse political views. When film producer, director and actor Rob Reiner decided to lead a national campaign on the importance of early childhood, people stopped and noticed. Reiner was able to get the attention of governors and parents alike and his leadership led to California's new early childhood funding (Proposition 10, which taxes cigarettes and devotes proceeds to statewide early childhood programs and services).

Some messengers are more credible than others to particular audiences. For example, ZERO TO THREE found in a nationwide survey of parents, that a family's most trusted messenger on child development is its pediatrician.[14] For some families and communities, faith leaders are powerful messengers. In other places, sports celebrities, entertainers or business leaders have the most influence. And throughout the country, law enforcement officials are credible and often unexpected early childhood messengers.

The key is to decide who the most effective messengers might be in your state or community and to involve them in your campaign.

### Unexpected Messengers

**Baltimore Starting Points asked faith leaders to teach about positive early development. The process began with a focus group with several local ministers to talk about the Starting Points project and enlist their help. The ministers were enthusiastic and the focus group led to a dinner to recruit 25 more ministers to focus on child development and effective parenting in their ministries. Starting Points provided: sample sermons on early childhood; a church bulletin insert with simple, research-based messages, such as "read to kids," "don't shake the baby," and others; and scriptures that relate to children and families. Many participating ministers used the materials in their church bulletins and gave sermons on early childhood following the dinner. During this process, Starting Points leaders learned that most of the city's numerous churches are small and lack staff. Ministers therefore appreciate simple, easy-to-use guidance for addressing early childhood issues with their congregations.**

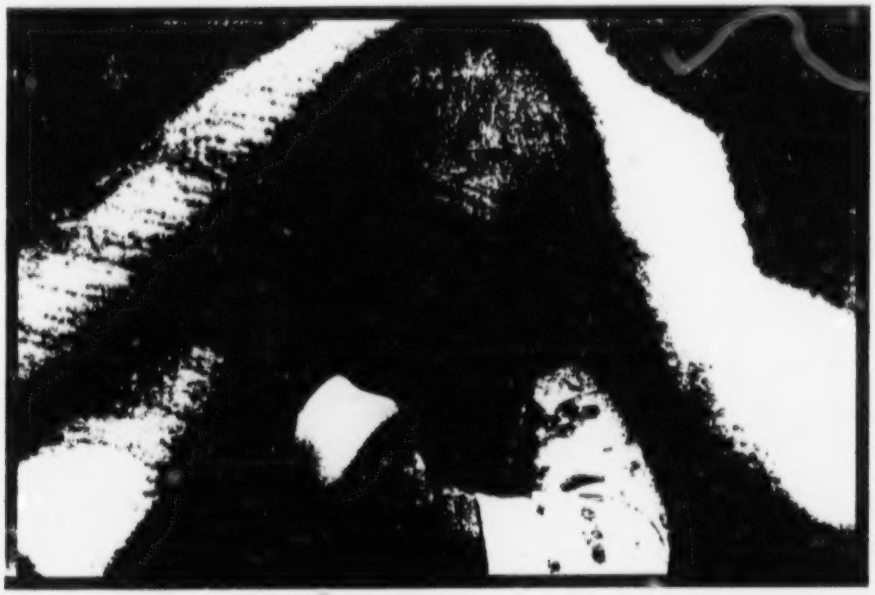
**Colorado Bright Beginnings and key partners are developing a campaign that features public leaders, such as police chiefs, faith leaders, firemen, politicians and other unexpected messengers speaking out on the importance of early language development.**

*Continued on page 19*

*Unexpected Messengers, continued from page 19*

**Fight Crime: Invest in Kids** is a national anti-crime organization led by more than five hundred police chiefs, sheriffs, police association presidents, prosecutors, and survivors of violent crime.[15] The group conducts polls and publishes reports that link early childhood and school age programs with juvenile crime, document the crime prevention impact of various investments in children and youth and publish data on law enforcement support for such investments. The organization's diverse members often serve as powerful unlikely messengers on early childhood issues.

**Reach Out and Read (ROR)** is a national initiative that uses pediatricians as messengers who promote early literacy as part of primary pediatric health care.[16] Participating pediatricians help parents understand the importance of reading aloud to their children from infancy. In participating pediatric practices and clinics: pediatricians encourage parents to read aloud and offer age-appropriate tips and encouragement; every child between the ages of six months and five years receives a new, developmentally appropriate children's book to take home and keep; and volunteer readers in waiting rooms read aloud to children, modeling for parents and children the pleasures and techniques of looking at books together. Through this program, every participating child begins school with a home library of at least ten books. The national center, located at Boston Medical Center, provides ROR start-up grants, training and technical assistance programs throughout the country.



## 3. Early Childhood Action Tips

It's not enough to make various stakeholders aware of an issue and what their stake is. Public engagement strategists must also be prepared to suggest how each stakeholder can help make things better. They must be able to answer the question, "What do you want me to do?" In states and communities throughout the country, public engagement leaders stress the importance of providing concrete direction for how people in all walks of life can help improve and expand early childhood programs and services. Often, a first action step leads to more action steps and more engagement. As people learn more about early childhood issues through their involvement, they typically come up with more ideas for how they can help. It is through this process of active engagement that change happens.

### This Section Includes Early Childhood Action Tips For:

- Architects, Developers and The Building Trades
- Businesses and Other Employers
- Civic, Community and Professional Organizations
- Colleges and Universities
- Faith Communities
- Hospitals and Health Care Professionals
- Law Enforcement
- Libraries
- Local Government
- Media
- Parents and Families
- Philanthropy
- Schools
- Seniors and Retirees
- Service Providers in a wide range of fields
- Unions and Worker Associations
- Youth

### How to Use the Tips

These tips can be used in a variety of ways. They can be localized, to include names and contacts of specific local programs or resources, and they can be shared in a variety of formats. For example, you may want to:

- Reprint some or all of the tips in newspapers, magazines, newsletters, professional journals, in conference materials and on product and service ads and packaging.
- Share the tips in a variety of formats, such as radio or TV public service announcements, as bookmarks, cards, mail inserts, magnets, flyers, posters, or as "ads" on bus and subway signs or on milk carton and shopping bag panels.
- Use the tips as overheads or handouts, or as part of targeted mailings to various audiences on the importance of early childhood issues.
- Use them to spark discussion at community meetings, or in response to the question, "What can I do to help young children and their families?"
- Provide the tips to local media to use as sidebars for early childhood stories.
- Challenge community groups to develop additional action ideas.

To help leaders encourage effective public engagement, FWI published a set of suggested actions for a wide variety of stakeholders that strengthen communities. These action tips are included in this volume in the hope that they will inspire positive action on behalf of young children and their families.

Some of these action tips are simple and practical. They are geared to get immediate results and can be acted on right away. Others are broader in scope and

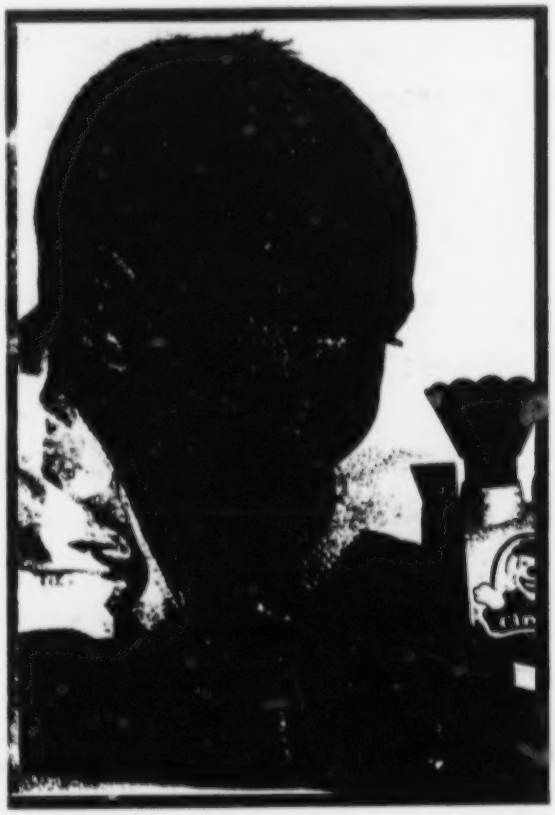
require more sustained effort. They seek change over the long haul. Any of these suggestions can be adopted or adapted to spark creative thinking about how to improve early childhood programs and services in your state or community.

## ARCHITECTS, DEVELOPERS AND THE BUILDING TRADES (CONTRACTORS, CARPENTERS, ELECTRICIANS, PAINTERS, PLUMBERS, ETC.) CAN:

- Assess the condition of playgrounds and facilities currently used for early childhood programs according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission's National Standards for Playground Safety.
- Volunteer to repair or renovate early childhood playgrounds and facilities.
- Design and build low-cost early care and education and family center facilities.
- Use non-toxic building materials.
- Encourage clients in public spaces to include rooms for parent classes and meetings, areas for mothers to nurse their infants and early care and education facilities in workplaces, parks, housing and commercial developments, and other public places.
- Include instruction about early childhood facility design and construction in architecture schools and building trades training and apprenticeship programs.
- Publish articles in professional journals about the importance of the early years and how a wide range of individuals and groups in the building trades can make a difference.

## BUSINESSES AND OTHER EMPLOYERS CAN:

- Work with media to publicize local programs that offer parent education, family support, early care and education and health services.
- Inform employees about the importance of the first years of life and provide parenting information using a wide variety of communication vehicles, such as bulletin boards, in-house newsletters, electronic networks, or literature in paycheck envelopes.
- Provide employees with family insurance coverage that provides such health services as prenatal and maternity care, well child and mental health care and immunizations.
- Learn about best practices in the work/family arena.



- Conduct surveys or focus groups to learn about employee needs.
- Create an internal task force to study needs.
- Underwrite some employee child care costs.
- Review policies and practices to consider how to become more supportive to families, and whenever possible, offer flexible work schedules and telecommuting options.
- Inform the public about the importance of the early years on company ads, promotions and products.
- Sponsor community parenting seminars or family support groups at the workplace.
- Invite local speakers to offer parenting seminars at work sites.
- Honor and reward employees who volunteer to provide or improve early childhood programs and services.
- Offer employees access to online parenting information and resources at work.
- Serve on community planning and improvement committees.
- Share expertise (such as accounting skills, management training, public relations, etc.) with early care and education programs and health and family support programs and volunteer to serve on their boards.

- Provide in-kind support, such as copying, faxing, mailing or printing to local early childhood health, education and care, and family support programs.
- Communicate concern about the importance of the early years to policymakers.
- Work with other community partners (United Way, service providers, government, media, philanthropy, faith communities, schools, libraries, unions, etc.) to expand and improve health services, early care and education, and family support/parent education programs for families with young children.

## CIVIC, COMMUNITY AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS CAN:

- Educate members and the public about the importance of the first years of life.
- Collect and publish information about state-and local early childhood needs and resources.
- Organize referral services and/or help lines for families with young children.
- Host or co-sponsor community forums on early childhood topics, such as early childhood brain development, parenting programs that work, improving the quality of child care, or expanding access to health care.
- Help local service providers design services that are sensitive to the cultural and linguistic needs and preferences of their communities. Help providers recognize and eliminate obstacles that may prevent segments of the community from using their services.
- Organize volunteers to build or refurbish neighborhood playgrounds or improve child care facilities.
- Organize volunteers to work in early childhood programs, mentor young children, or read stories to children in libraries, early education settings, and hospitals.

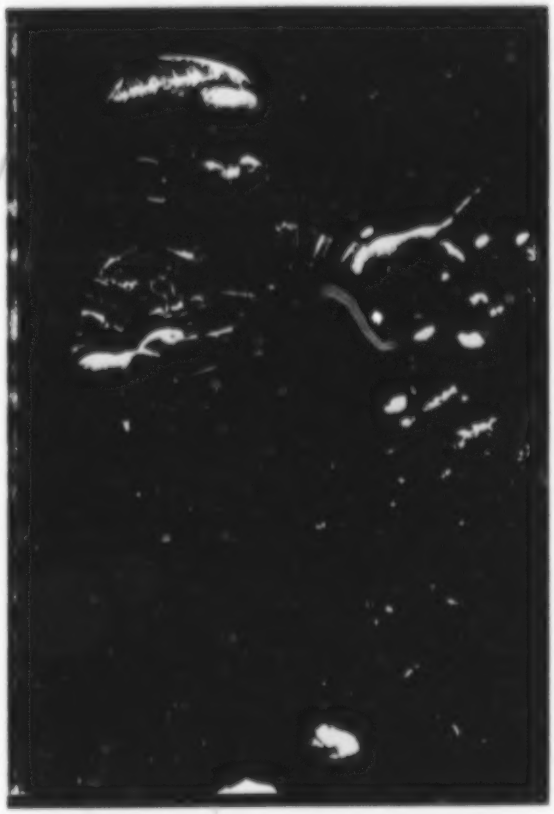
- Celebrate and honor state and community leaders and organizations that are making a difference for young children and their families.

## COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES CAN:

- Create campus parenting and child care programs for students and staff, and ensure that their facilities are safe and inviting for young children and their parents and caregivers.
- Establish curricula that encourage family-centered and collaborative practice among educators, health and family education and support professionals.
- Gather faculty and students across various disciplines and departments to share resources and research, and develop interdisciplinary programs and courses related to early childhood.
- Encourage faculty to make early childhood a focus of their research.
- Take active part in efforts—local, regional, and national—to raise the qualifications of individuals providing services for young children and their families.
- Provide courses and education programs for child care providers and other early childhood service providers at convenient times and places.
- Help evaluate the quality of local and regional early childhood services.
- Learn how other colleges and universities are supporting the healthy development of young children and replicate promising practices.
- Encourage and support students, faculty and staff to perform volunteer service in early childhood health, education and care, and family support/parent education programs.

## FAITH COMMUNITIES CAN:

- Share information about the importance of the first years of life.



- Include parenting books in the congregation's library.
- Celebrate families raising young children.
- Sponsor or donate space for parenting, family support, health care, and early care and education programs.
- Adopt a local early childhood program, offering financial support and other resources, the use of facilities, and/or volunteers from your congregation.
- Include information about healthy early childhood development in professional training and education programs for clergy and lay leaders, hospital chaplains, and seminary students.
- Mobilize retired and senior congregation members to volunteer in hospitals, early care and education programs, at libraries and at family centers.

- Organize parenting classes and provide child care to parents who attend.
- Encourage older members to "adopt" or "mentor" young families.
- Establish community-wide interfaith councils of child and family ministries that focus on the needs of new and expectant parents. If this kind of council exists in your area, become an active participant.
- Assure that family and community representatives are involved in designing any services developed to serve them.
- Inform the public about the importance of the early years and about local resources available to assist families with young children.

## GOVERNMENT (AT ALL LEVELS) CAN:

- Increase investments in young children and their families, tying new investments to research on effective policies and practices.
- Create incentives for other organizations, in the public and private sectors, to expand and improve services to families with young children.
- Require ongoing collaboration and coordination among agencies that administer early childhood programs and services.
- Collect and share data about the needs of young children and their families.
- Document and share information on the cost and effectiveness of programs serving young children and their families. Benchmark the results of these efforts.
- Convene groups of citizens to address early childhood issues.
- Convene a group of business leaders to investigate how to finance early childhood programs and services.
- Institute appropriate quality-control mechanisms to assure the safety and healthy development of young children in early childhood programs, and provide technical assistance to those who need to improve quality.
- Provide low- or no-interest loans to early childhood programs that have plans to improve quality or undertake facility construction and renovation.
- Establish tax advantages for family-friendly businesses.
- Support research that holds promise for improving results for young children and their families.

## HOSPITALS AND HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS CAN:

- Educate families, patients and staff about the importance of the first years of life, early brain development, and the importance of every child having a primary health care provider or "medical home."
- Work with community-based organizations, the media and early childhood professional organizations to promote and provide immunizations and health exams for young children.
- Provide expectant and new parents with information about maternal health, including mental health.
- Provide facilities and materials for prenatal and parenting classes, early care and education programs, and other services that support healthy early childhood development.
- Collaborate with other community partners to expand and improve locally available health, parenting and family support and early care and education programs.
- Inform policymakers about the importance of the first years of life, and support laws and policies that increase and improve health, parenting, family support and early care and education programs.
- Volunteer as telephone or on-site consultants to early childhood programs on health and safety issues.
- Use professional journals, conferences and meetings to inform peers about key issues in early child development, including new research on brain development.

## LAW ENFORCEMENT CAN:

- Inform other members of the law enforcement community, and the public at large, about the importance of the first years of life and the wisdom of prevention.

- Develop a vision of law enforcement that regards family support and parent education, voluntary home visits, and other services to families with young children as crime prevention strategies; share this vision with the public.
- Promote public policies and legislation designed to assist families with young children and prevent child abuse.
- Collaborate with other community partners (such as schools, health care providers, early care and education programs, and family support/parent education programs) to expand and improve services to families with young children.
- Include information about relevant issues in early child development, as well as child abuse prevention and intervention, in training programs for all law enforcement professionals. Train police officers to work collaboratively with social workers, health care providers, and other professionals who interact with young children and their families.

## LIBRARIES CAN:

- Publicize the importance of the first years of life.
- Become an information source about all community, child and family activities and initiatives.
- Publicize the availability of special collections of parenting materials as well as resources and books for young children.

- Provide meeting space to community groups working to improve the quality and availability of programs and services that support families with young children.
- Sponsor or host parenting and family literacy classes.
- Offer family literacy programs in early care and education and family resource centers and other community settings.
- Encourage families to read to their children beginning at birth and throughout childhood.
- Establish family reading rooms for other community groups.
- Hold story times for the youngest children and their caregivers.
- Help parents gain access to on-line resources about parenting and child development.
- Share on-line library services with early childhood programs.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAN:

- Develop legislation, public policies, budgets, taxes, and financing mechanisms that assist families with young children.
- Include programs and facilities for young children and their families in parks and in recreation and senior services departments.
- Use planning and zoning data about children and families to create appropriate regulations and facilities (parks, sidewalks, child care centers, family child care homes, housing, etc.).
- Link economic development and job creation with initiatives that meet the needs of young children and their families.
- Collaborate with community partners such as other local governments, schools, and non-profit organizations to expand and improve programs and services for young children and their families.

- Develop model programs.
- Advocate for young children and their families with county, state, and federal governments.
- Encourage the education of the people who provide services for young children, through scholarship funds and other strategies.
- Work with county, state, and federal regulators so that municipal regulations on fire, safety, and buildings are the same and/or complementary when applied to facilities for young children.
- Link maternal and child health, immunizations, and other child health and development resources with other programs and services for young children and their families.

## MEDIA CAN:

- Create and broadcast programming that informs the public about the importance of the early years.
- Create an early childhood "beat."
- Report on state or local efforts to expand and improve programs and services that assist families with young children.
- Organize and/or participate in state or local early childhood community efforts to improve the lives of young children and their families.
- Document positive aspects of the lives of families with young children.
- Publicize local resources available to families with young children.
- Report on state and community early childhood champions-individuals, organizations and businesses who are improving programs and services for young children and their families.

## PARENTS AND FAMILIES CAN:

- Acquire the skills and tools they need to become forceful advocates for their children.
- Learn more about early childhood development, including early brain development.
- Join and form parent support organizations.
- Speak out to the media and at public hearings about the needs of children and families.

- Talk with legislators and elected officials, call radio talk shows and write letters to the editor about early childhood needs and issues.
- Support and mentor other families.
- Attend courses and read parenting education materials.
- Ask for help when needed.

## PHILANTHROPY CAN:

- Provide long-term support for early childhood system development efforts.
- Fund, sponsor and convene community mobilization efforts to expand and improve the quality of programs and services available to young children and their families.
- Initiate and participate in partnerships with other sectors that improve and expand programs and services for young children and their families.
- Fund projects that demonstrate or replicate successful early childhood projects.
- Fund public awareness efforts.
- Provide low- or no-interest loans for quality-improvement efforts by early childhood programs, including renovation of facilities.
- Inform policymakers about the importance of the first years of life, and about local needs and conditions as well as ways to improve the quality and coordination of services for young children and their families.
- Form funding partnerships with peers to leverage or generate new resources for early childhood programs and services.
- Use funding programs creatively to meet a wide spectrum of needs experienced by families with young children.

## SCHOOLS CAN:

- Inform all school personnel and parents about the importance of the first years of life. Make this information available, to the greatest extent possible, to parents who are not fluent in English.
- Build partnerships with neighborhood early childhood programs and create effective transition programs from early childhood programs to schools.
- Incorporate information about parenting and child development, including new insights into early brain development, into the curricula of various content areas at all grade levels.
- Offer voluntary parent education programs, such as Parents as Teachers, HIPPY and family literacy programs.
- Provide programs that help teen parents finish school and learn parenting skills.
- Collaborate with other community partners to expand and improve services that assist families with young children.
- Include information on early childhood development in school libraries.
- Include early care and education and family center facilities in new school construction projects and reallocate vacant classrooms for such programs, when available.
- Offer indoor and outdoor space to early childhood program facilities.

## SENIORS AND RETIREES CAN:

- Volunteer to read to young children at libraries, hospitals, schools, early care and education programs and family resource centers.
- Volunteer to assist community organizations, agencies, and programs serving young children and their families.
- "Adopt" or mentor young families.

- Use their language skills to help recent immigrants gain access to services for their young children.
- Serve on the boards of non-profit organizations that provide programs and services for young children and their families.
- Learn and share information about early childhood development, including brain development.
- Talk with legislators and elected officials, call radio talk shows, and write letters to the editor about early childhood needs and issues.

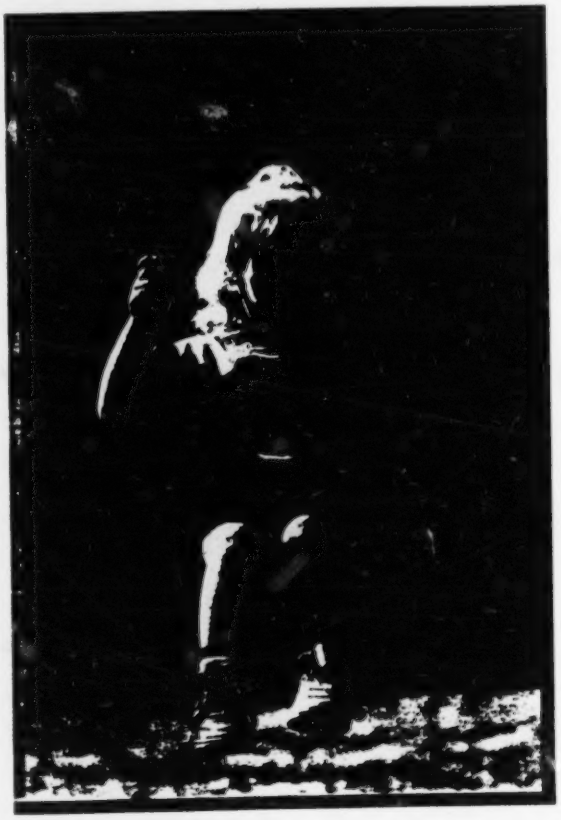
## SERVICE PROVIDERS IN A WIDE RANGE OF FIELDS (HEALTH CARE, FAMILY SUPPORT/ PARENT EDUCATION, EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION, CHILD WELFARE, ETC.) CAN:

- Educate families, staff and the public about the importance of the first years of life. Make a concerted effort to reach those who are not fluent in English or are isolated from the community by geographic, cultural, social, or economic factors.
- Involve a wide range of families and community members in designing and evaluating programs and services.
- Collaborate with other service providers and community partners on an ongoing basis to expand, coordinate, and improve early childhood programs and services. Share newsletters, sponsor shared staff training or develop new projects together.

- Make facilities safe and inviting for young children and their parents and caregivers.
- Enhance the quality of the early childhood services through staff development, national accreditation, and ongoing evaluation and improvement efforts.
- Participate in community efforts to define and improve the quality of services for young children and their families.
- Establish or contribute to "one-stop" resource centers to link families with appropriate services.
- Make collaborative efforts to help parents identify and seek early assistance for young children with disabilities.

## UNIONS AND WORKER ASSOCIATIONS CAN:

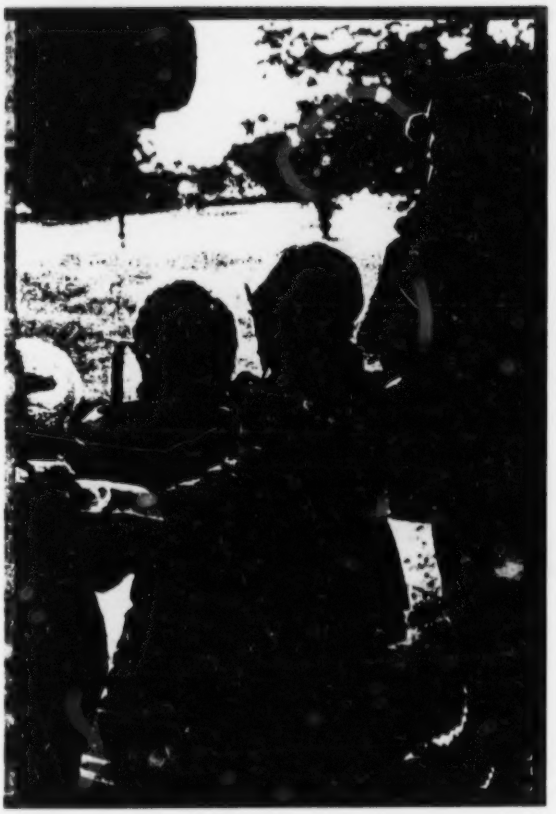
- Inform union members about the importance of the early years, through Union magazines or newsletters.
- Sponsor local speakers to offer parenting and child development seminars at work sites.
- Examine union contracts with member's family needs in mind, particularly those who are really struggling to manage work and family life. Look for contract provisions that address work and family concerns: flex-time, telecommuting, child care assistance, resource and referral services, paid leave, and other supports for families with young children.
- Draft contract proposals that address child care and family issues. Pay particular attention to flex-time language and insure that it both protects workers and supports the industry.
- Negotiate for family insurance coverage that provides such health services as prenatal and maternity care, well child and mental health care and immunizations.
- Survey or conduct focus groups to assess membership child care needs.
- Consult with local child care agencies or specialists for help in developing a survey that gets results.
- Present results at union meetings and develop an agenda for supporting parents with young children. Discuss the agenda at labor/management meetings.
- Honor and reward members who volunteer to provide or improve early childhood programs and services.
- Use the talent and skill of members to assist neighborhood child care, family support, child health and parenting programs with construction, maintenance, health care, technology, etc.



- Work with other community partners (United Way, service providers, government, media, philanthropy, faith communities, schools, libraries, employers, etc.) to expand and improve health services, early care and education, and family support/parent education programs for families with young children.
- Address child care, child health and parenting support issues as part of the union's political agenda.

## YOUTH CAN:

- Take seriously the vital contribution they can make as role models for their younger brothers and sisters and other young children in their neighborhoods.
- Volunteer to read to younger children at preschools, in family child care homes, in libraries, at church, school, family centers or in hospitals.
- Work through youth service groups (Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Campfire Girls and Boys Clubs, 4H Youth Development Groups, Kiwanis, settlement houses, etc.) to volunteer at area early care and education, health and parenting, and family support programs.
- Photograph, draw, paint or sculpt young children and their families for community awareness exhibits and activities.
- Learn about early childhood development.



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## Appendix A: Starting Points Projects Contact Information

General Information:
http://www.carnegie.org/starting_points

San Francisco, CA:
carol@mocyf.org

Colorado:
http://www.brightbeginnings.org

Florida:
http://www.chilescenter.org

Hawaii:
http://www.goodbeginnings.org

Boston, MA:
elisemd@bu.edu

Baltimore, MD:
bns302@aol.com

North Carolina:
http://www.ncsmartstart.org

Pittsburgh, PA:
http://www.pitt.edu/~ocdweb

Rhode Island:
http://www.rikidscount.org

Vermont:
http://www.ahs.state.vt.us

West Virginia:
http://www.citynet.net/wvfamilies

## Appendix B: Media Resource List

ORGANIZATIONS

### Ad Council

The Ad Council uses the power of advertising to stimulate action against the problems confronting Americans today, creating timely and compelling public service messages Americans need to hear. For more information, contact http://www.adcouncil.org.

### Benton Foundation

The Benton Foundation has worked to realize the social benefits made possible by the public interest use of communications. Through its projects, the foundation seeks to shape the emerging communications environment in the public interest. Bridging the worlds of philanthropy, public policy and community action, Benton demonstrates and promotes the use of digital media to engage, equip and connect people to solve social problems. For more information, contact http://www.benton.org.

### Child Care Action Campaign

Child Care Action Campaign: communicates innovative ideas for improving child care to inspire parents, community leaders and the public to take action, with special emphasis on literacy and universal prekindergarten; stimulates investment in child care by employers, state and local governments, schools and community organizations; encourages partnerships among communities, schools and business leaders to improve child care and early education and to make it affordable to all working families; and advocates public policies that support families. For more information, contact http://www.childcareaction.org.

### Communication Consortium Media Center

The Communications Consortium Media Center helps nonprofit organizations use media and new telecommunications technologies as tools for public education and policy change. They have worked with scores of nonprofits around the U.S. and around the globe on an array of issues, from children and families to global population to learning disabilities to diversity in media. For more information, contact http://www.ccmc.org.

### I Am Your Child

*I Am Your Child* is a national public awareness and engagement campaign to make early childhood development a top priority for our nation. *I Am Your Child* has educated millions of parents and professionals about breakthrough new discoveries in the process of brain development. Through mass media, community mobilization, public education and policy outreach, parents and caregivers across the U.S. and around the world are learning how to make a difference in the lives of young children. For more information, contact http://www.iamyourchild.org.

### National Latino Children's Institute

The National Latino Children's Institute (NLCI) is the only national Latino organization that focuses exclusively on children. NLCI's mission, to serve as the voice for valuing young Latinos, is fulfilled by promoting and implementing the National Latino Children's Agenda. Their web site offers information regarding research on policies and programs affecting Latino children, community based programs, and public education campaigns that create awareness regarding early childhood development and the needs of Latino children. For more information, contact http://www.nlci.org.

### National Black Child Development Institute

The National Black Child Development Institute advances a multi-faceted agenda to promote and protect the well-being of all African-American children. NBCDI's programs assist children and families who are experiencing challenges in the areas of early care and education, health, parenting, education, and child welfare. NBCDI also serves as a resource to people who are professionally and personally committed to children and families. For more information, contact http://www.nbcdi.org.

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1 *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, Third Edition Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996 http://www.allwords.com

2 *Starting Points* recommendations included: promoting responsible parenthood, guaranteeing quality child care choices, ensuring good health and protection, and mobilizing communities to support young children and their families.

3 Campaign founders included Hollywood talent, spearheaded by Rob Reiner, foundations, business, media, and early childhood organizations. This work was supported by the AT&T Foundation, California Wellness Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Commonwealth Fund, Charles A. Dana Foundation, Inc., Freddie Mac Foundation, The Harris Foundation, Teresa & H. John Heinz III Foundation, IBM Corporation, Johnson & Johnson, Kaiser Permanente, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, A.L. Mailman Family Foundation, Inc., The Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and The Travelers Foundation.

4 To join the EC-PEN, e-mail a request including all contact information to: **commob@familiesandwork.org**

5 Proposition 10 was enacted by California voters in 1999 to allocate revenue from a fifty cent per pack cigarette tax to counties to improve early childhood outcomes.

6 The Child Care Fund of Vermont was founded in 1995 by the Vermont Community Foundation to build a long-term sustainable base of financial and moral support to improve child care in Vermont. The Fund supports quality improvement and public awareness efforts. For more information, contact the Child Care Fund of Vermont, 802 863 4188 or **julie@ccfv.vermontcf.org**.

7 For more information on *Lifetime TV*'s Caring for Kids Campaign, visit **http://www.lifetimetv.com**.

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13 Fight Crime: Invest in Kids conducts polls and publishes research documenting links between early childhood development and crime and engages law enforcement leaders as early childhood champions. For more information contact **http://www.fightcrime.org**.

14 For more information, contact: **http://www.zerotothree.org**

15 For more information, contact: **http://www.fightcrime.org**

16 For more information, contact: **http://www.reachoutandread.org**

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## Starting Points

This brief was created as part of **Carnegie Corporation of New York's Starting Points State and Community Partnerships for Young Children**. Starting Points was established to plan and implement the reforms described in the Corporation's task force report, *Starting Points: Meeting the Needs of Our Youngest Children*. The four goals of the initiative are promoting responsible parenthood, ensuring high quality child care, providing children with good health and protection, and mobilizing the public to support young children and families. Starting Points sites are Baltimore, Boston, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Vermont and West Virginia. National partners include The Finance Project **(www.financeproject.org)**, Columbia University School of Public Health **(www.columbia.edu)**, the National Center for Children in Poverty **(www.nccp.org)**, and the Families and Work Institute **(www.familiesandwork.org)**. More information about Carnegie Corporation can be found at www.carnegie.org.

## Families and Work Institute

Families and Work Institute (FWI) is a non-profit center for research that provides data to inform decision-making on the changing workplace, changing family and changing community. Founded in 1989, FWI is known for ahead of the curve, non-partisan research into emerging work-life issues; for solutions-oriented studies addressing topics of vital importance to all sectors of society; and for fostering connections among workplaces, families, and communities. FWI's rigorous data are highly respected. Its research, which has influenced decisions across the nation, is sought out by business and community leaders, policy-makers, individual families, educators and the media. For more information, please see our Web site at **www.familiesandwork.org**.

**Families** and **Work** Institute
330 Seventh Avenue, 14th Floor
New York, NY 10001
(212) 465-2044 phone
(212) 465-8637 fax
www.familiesandwork.org

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